

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, ICFTU, SF

SUBJ: EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES STATEMENT

REF: US EC BRUSSELS 7740

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF SUBJECT STATEMENT.

QTE STATEMENT ON EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES OF U.S. FIRMS OPERATING IN
SOUTH AFRICA

QTE IN FEBRUARY 1973 THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE ISSUED A PAPER
ENTITLED "EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES OF U.S. FIRMS IN SOUTH AFRICA", ONE
PURPOSE OF WHICH WAS "TO ASSIST IN INDICATING SOME OF THE AREAS
OF ACTIVITY IN WHICH FIRMS" COULD "IMPROVE THEIR LABOR PRACTICES."
THE PAPER DRAMATIZED THE LEADING INNOVATIVE ROLES WHICH MANY U.S.
FIRMS HAD PLAYED UP TO THE BEGINNING OF 1973 BY CITING A SUB-
STANTIAL NUMBER AND VARIETY OF SPECIFIC INSTANCES IN WHICH THEY
HAD UNDERTAKEN TO IMPROVE THE WAGES, WORKING CONDITIONS, FRINGE
BENEFITS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT, AND TO ENHANCE THE
DIGNITY OF THEIR BLACK WORKERS. AT THE SAME TIME, IT POINTED OUT
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THAT A GREAT DEAL REMAINED TO BE DONE IN THESE AREAS.

QTE SINCE THIS PAPER APPEARED, MANY U.S. FIRMS RESPONDING TO RAPIDLY CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVE CONTINUED TO IMPROVE THEIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMS. THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT IS TO URGE THAT U.S. FIRMS PERSIST IN AVAILING THEMSELVES OF EVERY REASONABLE AND LEGALLY PERMISSIBLE MEANS TO ENSURE THAT ALL OF THEIR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE WHAT THEY NEED TO PURSUE DECENT AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

QTE WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT EITHER NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE AT THIS TIME TO TRY TO PRESCRIBE A LONG LIST OF SPECIFIC GOALS OR DETAILED BLUE-PRINTS FOR ACTION. THERE IS ALREADY AVAILABLE IN SOUTH AFRICA A LARGE AND GROWING BODY OF CURRENT STATISTICAL AND OTHER INFORMATION UPON WHICH FIRMS CAN BASE DETERMINATIONS AS TO WHAT CONSTITUTES A DECENT WAGE IN A GIVEN SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES OR WHICH FRINGE BENEFITS WOULD BE MOST USEFUL IN SUPPLEMENTING LOCAL CAPABILITIES AND RESOURCES

IN SUCH BASIC AREAS AS EDUCATION AND HOUSING. THIS BEING THE CASE, THE FOLLOWING GOALS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE RATHER THAN DEFINITIVE OR COMPREHENSIVE.

QTE TO PAY THE "RATE FOR THE JOB" OR "EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK";

QTE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PENSION, INSURANCE AND MEDICAL BENEFITS;

QTE TO PROVIDE SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES FOR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR CHILDREN;

QTE TO ASSIST EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES TO OBTAIN ADEQUATE HOUSING;

QTE TO PROVIDE SKILLS TRAINING ON A REGULAR BASIS AIMED AT HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY;

QTE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT BASED SOLELY ON MERIT.

QTE THE 1973 PAPER RECOMMENDED A NUMBER OF MECHANISMS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE AND RELATED GOALS. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE CHANGES WHICH ARE NOW TAKING PLACE IN THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PICTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA, WE BELIEVE THAT CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION
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SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES USING ALL AVAILABLE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS.; THIS WOULD ENCOMPASS BEING PREPARED TO ENGAGE IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITH LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVES OF BLACK WORKERS INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF UNREGISTERED TRADE UNIONS IF, AS AND WHEN THEY COME INTO EXISTENCE. WE NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION THAT, WHILE UNREGISTERED UNIONS ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY PROVIDED FOR IN SOUTH AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL

RELATIONS LEGISLATION, THEY ARE NOT ILLEGAL. SEVERAL BLACK UNREGISTERED TRADE UNIONS ARE NOW FUNCTIONING IN NATAL AND THE TRANSVAAL AND ONE VERY LARGE BLACK UNREGISTERED UNION HAS BEEN OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY FOR MANY YEARS IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY.

QTE WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE VALID AND OBVIOUS ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE CONTINUATION OF THE LEADING INNOVATIVE ROLES WHICH U.S. FIRMS ARE PLAYING IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN THE FIRST PLACE, ENLIGHTENED EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES RESULT IN GREATER WORKER PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY: SECOND, THEY PUBLICLY DEMONSTRATE THE U.S. EMPLOYER'S WORLD-WIDE COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: AND THIRD, THEY ARE A MECHANISM FOR THE PROMOTION OF PEACEFUL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS. UNQTE GUTHRIE

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